

What is claimed is:

1. A passenger protection apparatus for a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:
  - a pair of active knee bolsters provided in an instrument panel or at a vicinity thereof, each bolster being capable of restraining a corresponding lower limb of a passenger;
  - a detector which, at a time of a collision, can detect a direction thereof; and
  - a controller which, in accordance with the detection, can control the active knee bolsters independently from each other.
2. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of the active knee bolsters includes an operating portion for restraining the corresponding passenger lower limb and a driving portion for driving the operating portion.
3. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 2, wherein the operating portion is movable in a direction substantially parallel to the direction of a collision.
4. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 2, wherein the operating portion is movable in a hinged door manner.
5. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 2, wherein the operating portion constitutes part of a surface of the instrument panel.
6. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 1, wherein the detector comprises a vehicle acceleration sensor.

7. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller appropriately and independently controls at least one of the active knee bolsters in accordance with conditions of a collision.

8. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 7, wherein the collision is a frontal collision, a frontal offset collision, an oblique collision, or a side impact collision or the like.

9. A passenger protection apparatus for a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

a pair of active knee bolsters provided in an instrument panel or at a vicinity thereof, each bolster being capable of restraining a corresponding lower limb of a passenger;

another active knee bolster provided in a vehicle front side door or at a vicinity thereof, said another bolster being capable of restraining one of the lower limbs;

yet another active knee bolster provided in a center console or at a vicinity thereof, said yet another bolster being capable of restraining the other of the lower limbs;

a detector which, at a time of a collision, can detect a direction thereof; and

a controller which, in accordance with the detection, can control the active knee bolsters independently from one another.

10. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 9, wherein each of the active knee bolsters includes an operating portion for restraining the corresponding passenger lower limb and a driving portion for driving the operating portion.

11. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 9, wherein the controller appropriately and independently controls at least one of the active knee bolsters in accordance with conditions of a collision.

12. The passenger protection apparatus of claim 11, wherein the collision is a frontal collision, a frontal offset collision, an oblique collision, or a side impact collision or the like.